

weight in the statement, in Arévalo's compilation, that the red-spotted form had been obtained at Valencia and Malaga. The assumption that "the Crane breeds only very locally and very sparingly in Spain" is only borne out in Col. Irby's well-known work with the important qualification that it is ceaseless persecution which is driving the birds from the places where in years gone by "they used to nest in great numbers." Moreover, the only marshes in Spain known to ornithologists are those of Andalucia, for men go like sheep to the ground discovered thirty years ago, and no one has any idea of what there may be on the Upper and Lower Guadiana. There are a good many crudities in Mr. Whitlock's criticisms.

XIV.—Letters, Extracts, Notices, &c.

WE have received the following letters, addressed "to the Editors of 'The Ibis.'" Count Arrigoni Degli oddi's letter was accidentally omitted in our last number, for which we owe him many apologies.

SIRS,—In the last volume of 'The Ibis' Mr. Sushkin has described a new Palearctic Goose under the name of *Anser neglectus*, from specimens obtained by him in the East of Russia. I beg leave to call your attention to an apparently similar specimen in Count Ninni's collection in the Museum of the city of Venice. On the label it is marked as a "female, killed in February, 1890, in our lagoons." The following are the characters that distinguish it from a typical *A. segetum*:—Bill much more slender, under mandible less curved in the middle portion, the nail more curved, the horny teeth small, the light colour on the bill extending beyond the nostril; white feathers around the frontal angle, and also two white marks at the base of the upper mandible; the colour of the head and neck darker, especially in the hinder parts; upper parts darker, the edges of the dark-coloured feathers of the upper parts and flanks browner; a little white spot on the chin; underparts of a darker greyish tint; the white of the lower abdomen also less pure.

The size is about the same as that of *A. segetum*, but I cannot give the precise dimensions, the bird being stuffed; the bill from the gape measures 2·3 inches, the tarsus 2·8 inches, the middle toe with claw 2·9 inches.

This specimen seems to possess all the characters ascribed by Mr. Sushkin to his *A. neglectus* as regards the form of bill, the colour of head and neck, the white marks on the maxilla, &c. The only difference I find is the flesh-colour of the middle portion of the bill and of the feet. The specimen has been stuffed a long time and the colour is faded, but these parts have not been artificially coloured, nor does any information on this point exist on the label.

This specimen, I must say, is particularly noticeable, because it put us in the following dilemma: either the flesh-colour on the bill and feet did not formerly exist, and it was certainly an example of *A. neglectus*; or these parts had the colour of *A. segetum*, and then the supposed new species would be different from it only by this character (see Mr. Sushkin's diagnosis), and the other characteristic features put forward by Mr. Sushkin would be of slight importance.

Knowing how many and what individual variations the various species of the group *A. segetum* offer, I dare not pronounce an opinion of the validity of the new species, which I know only through the description of Mr. Sushkin. I have thought it worth while, however, to inform you of the existence of this interesting specimen, and if further comparisons shall decide its identity with *Anser neglectus* (in case the validity of this species should be acknowledged), the important fact that Italy is on the line of its migrations will be settled.

Yours &c.,

E. ARRIGONI DEGLI ODDI.

Caoddo, near Monselice, Padua, Italy,

May 31st, 1897.

SIRS,—It has been pointed out to me by Mr. C. W. Richmond, of the U.S. National Museum, that the term *Oreospiza*,

which I have proposed (see *Ibis*, 1897, p. 338) for a new genus of Fringillidæ from New Guinea, has been previously employed in ornithology for a North-American Finch (see Ridgway, *Manual N. Amer. B.* ed. 2, p. 605). I therefore wish to change this term to *Oreostruthus*. The New-Guinea bird will, therefore, in future stand as *Oreostruthus fuliginosus*.

Yours &c.,

C. W. DE VIS.

Brisbane, Queensland,
Sept. 4th, 1897.

SIRS,—A remarkable misapprehension as to the positions usually assumed by the Penguins when on land appears to have gained ground among naturalists. Both Dr. Morrison Watson, in his Report on the Anatomy of the Spheniscidæ ('Challenger' Reports, Zoology, vol. vii. p. 237), and Dr. H. Gadow, in his contribution to Bronn's 'Thier-reich' (vol. vi. Abth. 4, Aves, Syst. Theil, pp. 124, 126), state that these birds are plantigrade—applying the tarso-metatarsus as well as the toes to the ground when walking.

That this is an error will be evident to any one examining the fine series of living Penguins which has been exhibited at the Zoological Society's Gardens this summer. This comprised, on the occasions on which I inspected it, three examples of *Spheniscus demersus*, two of *Eudyptula minor*, and one each of *Aptenodytes pennanti*, *Eudyptes chrysocome*, and *E. sclateri*—a good representative collection.

These birds, which I observed with especial care, all walked in the ordinary digitigrade position common to birds in general, their weight being supported mainly or entirely by the toes.

When at rest, also, these birds usually stood up on their toes, though I have seen the plantigrade position occasionally assumed by all the species except the two "Rock-hoppers."

But this latter was certainly not the *ordinary* standing position, as is stated by Professor A. Newton in his 'Dictionary of Birds' (art. *Penguin*, p. 705), where the gait of Penguins when in motion is described correctly.

I noticed, indeed, that the King Penguin remained erect on its toes even when it had the head turned over the back in the sleeping posture; while one of the little Blue Penguins, by having sores or "corns" on the pad at the base of the toes, plainly showed that it had habitually stood in this position when at rest.

No doubt the distal end of the tarso-metatarsus enters into the support of the Penguins when standing and walking, but the idea that they *constantly* support themselves on the whole length of this bone is quite a mistake, and when they occasionally sit down on their "hocks" they are doing no more than many other birds do—Adjutants and Cassowaries, for example.

The misconception would appear, from Dr. Watson's note (*loc. cit.*), to have originated with C. Geoffroy nearly a hundred years ago ("Note sur les Manchots," Bulletin de Sciences par la Société Philomathique, Paris, 1798, vol. i. p. 81), and it is to me a matter of wonder that it should have endured so long, considering that Penguins have frequently been kept in confinement and have been correctly figured. The Guillemot (*Lomvia troile*) appears to be generally plantigrade, but this is not the case with any other diving-bird, so far as I have seen.

Yours, &c.,

FRANK FINN.

30 Trebovir Road, Earl's Court, London,
October 13th, 1897.

SIRS,—The visits which *Fuligula rufina* pays to the British Isles are so occasional, and at such considerable intervals, that the occurrence of a male of this species in the heart of Lakeland seems to call for a passing notice. The bird in question was seen on a small tarn in the neighbourhood of Haweswater, Westmoreland, on the 9th of October, 1897. The only other bird on the tarn was a Mallard. The Red-crested Pochard was shot by John Noble, a farmer, who took it to our taxidermist, Mr. Hope, of Penrith. Mr. Hope at once sent for me to confirm his

identification of the bird, which I handled in the flesh; it was in good condition, and turned the scales at 2 lb. 4 ozs. It is in the plumage of youth, but is in "change," and corresponds, in fact, to the appearance which was presented, in the same month, by a male *Faligula rufna* bred in the Gardens of the Zoological Society in 1886. It would therefore appear to be a little more than four months old.

Yours, &c.,

H. A. MACPHERSON.

Allonby Vicarage, Cumberland
October 16th, 1897.

SIRS,—Permit me to say, with regard to your note on the way I spell the name of the British Creeper, viz., *Certhia f. britannica** (Ibis, 1897, p. 615), that it is not the same to spell that name and the word Britain with two t's. It is not necessary to suppose that I wish the Editors of 'The Ibis,' or any one else, to spell Britain with two t's, but I am justified in spelling the name "*britannica*" as the author of that term originally spelt it, especially since in all, or at least nearly all old Roman manuscripts, the name of this country is spelt "Brittania" (*sic*), and the classical spelling of the name is therefore with two t's, in spite of our modern way of writing it. It is, therefore, I think, evident that Ridgway purposely spelt the name of the British Creeper with two t's and one n, and that it should be so written by us, although we all write Britain with one t.

Yours &c.,

ERNST HARTERT.

Tring, November, 1897.

The Bird-Collections of the British Museum.—The Parliamentary Report of the British Museum was issued too late last year to allow us to notice it in our October number. We now transcribe the most important portions relating to the collection of Birds:—

"Considerable progress has been made during the year with the registration and incorporation of recent accessions. The

* Not "*britannica*," as you quote my spelling!—E. H.